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EDITORIAL NOTES.

NOTICE!

The statement has been made by sundry persons who should know better, that the accounts of the Society have never been investigated. This is absolutely untrue. Every item of income or expense has been accounted for and examined by an expert accountant beginning in May, 1905. The books are closed on the 31st of December of each year and turned over to an expert accountant who is employed by the Council for that purpose. These reports for 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908 and 1909 are on file. Moreover, every year a copy of the auditor's report has been placed in the hands of every delegate in attendance. The annual investigation is not made hurriedly and carelessly by members appointed as an auditing committee, but is done thoroughly and carefully by men whose business it is to audit accounts and look for anything wrong. They have given a clean bill of health for each and every year. The Secretary is under bonds—and he likes the climate of San Francisco.

The most important action of the House of Delegates at the last meeting, Sacramento, April 20th, 1910, was undoubtedly the establishment of medical defense on a permanent basis. The experience of other states and our own experience

MEDICAL DEFENSE.

since last July have shown conclusively that all members may be defended in all suits for alleged malpractice for a comparatively small sum per annum. One dollar per member is a sum so small as to be insignificant to any practicing physician, and yet that one dollar per member, taken in the aggregate furnishes enough to more than take care of all the expense under any ordinary circumstances. It was the opinion of the House of Delegates that it would be well to make the assessment one dollar and thus accumulate something ahead, after which time the assessment could be reduced to conform more nearly to the amount of the year's expenses for this purpose. The assessment covering the period from last July to the 31st of this coming December, was made due and payable before July 1st, 1910. Every member should therefore see to it that his assessment is paid by his county society before that date. This money must be paid by each member to his county society and that society will, in turn, pay for the whole of its membership in a lump sum to be remitted to the Secretary. Do not send your individual assessment for Medical Defense to the office of the State Society; it is to be paid to your county society. So much for the business end of the subject. If you are a member in good standing—dues fully paid up—you are fully protected by the State Society and any suit against you for alleged malpractice will be defended by the legal department of the Society to the court of last resort. But see to it that you keep up your membership and that your assessment is paid for you to the State Society before July 1st, 1910.

The plan adopted is very simple; there are but three requirements. First, you must be a member in good standing, dues paid in your county society, and you must have been in good standing at the time the alleged malpractice was committed. Second, the alleged malpractice must have occurred after you became a member of the society, or after the 1st day of July, 1909. Third, you must send to the Secretary of the State Society, within forty-eight hours after you are served in any suit, a full, true and correct copy of the complaint together with a full statement of all the facts in the case. Is there anything difficult about any of these requirements? Pay your dues and keep them paid; notify the office of the Society promptly when you are sued or a suit is threatened. That is all there is to it. You will be put to no additional expense, other than your dues.

Mistaken impressions in regard to certain details connected with our Medical Defense plan seem to have been obtained by some members.

Investigating committee: There is an impression that any threatened or actual suit against a member is to be investigated by a committee of his county society and not defended unless they report favorably. This is not the case; every suit will be fought. The Council considered this point at some length, and while it is true that this provision is in force in some states, the Council did not think it wise, for an adverse opinion by a committee would at once put a great handicap upon a member who would then have to defend such a suit at his own expense.

A committee of the county society is provided for in our plan, but it is a committee to investigate and report the facts to our attorney and to consult with the defendant. The suit will be defended just the same whether such a committee is needed or appointed or not. Have no anxiety on that score.

Delinquent members are not members in good standing. Any names reported to us by county secretaries as "delinquent" are dropped from our rolls; the State Society recognizes only members and non-members; not members "delinquent." If you are in the delinquent class at the time you treat some patient who subsequently brings suit for malpractice, you can not be defended by the State Society. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to look after your standing in your county society and see that at all times your dues are fully paid up. The amount is very small. In no county society in the state are the dues any more than would be the price of medical insurance alone, if you undertook to buy it from a company.

Medical Defense of our members is a positively established fact. You will be defended in any suit for alleged malpractice that may be brought against you, absolutely without cost to yourself. This protection of the State Society covers all of your work since July 1st, 1909, and will cover it so long as you remain in good standing in your society. Is it not worth while to belong and to keep up your membership?

The report of the Council presented at the Sacramento meeting of the State Society, calls attention in most calm words to an evil in the practice of medicine which has been and is growing at such an alarming rate that it threatens to work incalculable evil, not alone to the younger physicians, but to the public and to the public esteem of medicine and of medical men. To put a noble and a learned profession on the bargain counter basis, is certainly an undignified thing to do. Furthermore, either consciously or unconsciously, any physician who is treating sick people on the dollar-a-month plan is going to spend the smallest possible amount of time on each patient, with the foregone result that a great many patients will be neglected, not infrequently to their serious peril. It is a calamitous thing from every point of view and if there is the slightest possibility of discovering a remedy, let us devoutly pray that it may be discovered. The House of Delegates called upon the President to appoint a committee to study this matter fully and report at the next meeting. Undoubtedly the President will take the greatest care in the selection of the committee, and that being done we should do everything in our power to aid them in their work. Contract practice, lodge practice, dollar-a-month concerns, all of these institutions that work for the lowering of the medical profession and the injury of the public, should, in some way, be abolished. The man at the top of a particular specialty can laugh at all this, but the general practitioner or the younger man can not laugh; he sees not only unfair competition, but he sees actual injury

being done to people who could afford, and would if they knew just what they were getting in the way of medical care, to pay a competent physician his regular fees and get that proper care for which they pay. To the specialist at the top, people will come even if they do belong to some organization permitting them to receive free treatment, provided that they have some serious complaint along the line of that man's specialty. It is a question directly affecting the rank and file of the profession, and it is the rank and file that really counts, when all is said and done. Of course it is impossible to legislate honesty or decency into any one. But can there not be found some way in which the men who are prostituting themselves and their profession in this manner can be shown the error of their way and the harm they are doing, not to themselves alone but to the whole profession of medicine and to the public?

The anti-tuberculosis activities in the state are certainly making progress. Not only is the medical

TUBERCULOSIS profession arousing a good deal
CAMPAIGN. of interest among the laity in
the work of fighting this disease, but it is also arousing a

good deal of interest and activity among its own members. A great many more physicians are now studying and writing upon the modern handling of cases of tuberculosis than ever before and the interest seems to be very general. The State Association has made an excellent showing and the Second Annual Report of the San Francisco Society is a most creditable document. The dispensary started in San Francisco should be of the greatest benefit to that community and it is a shame that our municipal governments are not sufficiently alive to the importance of the movement to take it up officially and operate these dispensaries as municipal affairs. In the long run the community would greatly benefit in actual hard dollars, for every breadwinner or housewife incapacitated from work sooner or later makes some charge or expense to the community. Every such individual cured and put back into the producing class is a definite financial gain to the city. Insurance companies are appreciating this very fully and not a few of them have arranged to have their insured examined as often as they may desire, free of charge, on the principle that it is cheaper to keep the insured well and working and thus paying premiums, than to let them get sick and die when they might be saved for some years longer. This is exactly the idea involved in the commercial consideration of the anti-tuberculosis movement; it is cheaper and better, financially, for the community to cure or greatly relieve a tuberculous than it is to allow him to go his course, spread the disease to many others, become a helpless invalid and very often a charge on the city, and die far short of the years allotted him and which might have been his with a little thoughtful care. Again is the fact emphasized that bad housing is the most important factor in the spread of tuberculosis, for though but 27 of those treated at the dispensary in San Francisco were females, it appears that 13% of the total number treated were housewives; the one who is